

LEBANON MEI
SYRIA MDI

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SYRIA AND LEBANON

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into Jordan. There is a branch line from Deraa to Suwayda, but another branch, to Haila, is out of use.

Damas-Hama et Prolongements. (a) From Beirut to Damascus there is a narrow-gauge track running for 91 miles via Rayaq; rack and pinion are used to traverse the mountains, and this slow haul is now employed for freight only. (b) From Rayaq to Aleppo there is a 4 ft 8 in. gauge track for 270 miles which passes through Hama and Hama. (c) The stretch of the Cairo-Turkey line from Ras an-Naqura on the Lebanese-Israel border to Beirut is out of commission but the section of 64 miles in standard gauge from Beirut to Tripoli and Hama is used.

Syria state Railways. This is the part (164 miles) of the Turkey-Mena. line that runs inside Syrian territory.

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Roads

Main arterial roads in Lebanon are considered adequate, but the network of secondary and feeder roads is poor. In Syria the road system is generally inadequate, and only the asphalted roads are usable for heavy traffic throughout the year. The following figures give some indication of the position:

SYRIA, 1951		LEBANON, 1949	
	Miles		Miles
asphalted	4,377	asphalted	1,811
and clay, macadamized	1,248	unimproved	674
Tracks	5,148		

(Source: National's Year-Book, 1952; UN Dept. of Commerce.)

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There are over 11,000 vehicles registered in Syria. Trans-desert passenger and goods services to Iraq are in regular use and goods are also moved, including refrigerated vegetables, to Kuwait and Bahrain. The authorities are restricting the registration of new licences to the estimated needs of the economy, but more vehicles are required, particularly diesel lorries for long hauls of heavy loads.

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Airports. The new airport of Beirut (Khaldik) replaces the *Gustaf*, and is 'beginning' to rival Cairo as a gateway to the East, and that of Damascus (Menzeh) has long been in use by Constellation. Many international airlines stage at Khaldik or Menzeh; the approach to Khaldik is better and, with between twenty and thirty aircraft a day, it has since 1951 outstripped Menzeh, which has five to ten aircraft a day. For some years plans have been under consideration for moving the Damascus airport to the east of the city. There are two private Lebanese airlines. A national airline in Syria was a financial failure and was taken over by the army. Smaller airfields exist near Tripoli,

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ECONOMIC SURVEY

near Aleppo, and at Rayaq and there are many emergency landing fields.

See Paris. Since 1950 Beirut has handled over 2 million tonnage of ships a year; an increase of about a quarter of a million over the pre-war figures. The port has a free zone through which goods are shipped to Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. But the Syrian Government hopes to divert some of the transit trade from Beirut and has, with the assistance of a loan of \$6 million from Saudi Arabia, formed a company to develop Latakia in order to handle about a million tons of goods a year (in 1950 431,393 tons were handled). Work on the extension of the port was begun by a Yugoslav firm in April 1955. Tripoli, Sidon, and Baalbek are ports handling the oil from the pipelines and are little used for other purposes.

Wires and Telephones. An automatic telephone exchange system covers most of Syria and an automatic exchange is planned for Beirut. Telephone links with Europe and America are available through Beirut and normal cable facilities exist. The Syrian state broadcasting authority has two large transmitters and broadcasts in Arabic, French, English, and Hebrew. Near Beirut there is a station which broadcasts in Arabic, French, and English.

The 'Common Interest'

Under the Mandate, Syria and Lebanon formed an economic and customs union, the Higher Council of Common Interests, under the direct control of France, which administered customs and excise and controlled concessionary companies, antiquities, and some other services. On 1 January 1944 the control was transferred to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. The currencies were linked and interchangeable, and both the Syrian and Lebanese pounds were largely backed by French francs based on a rate of 8-85 to the pound sterling (then worth 14-15). In order to maintain a good profit on the exchange brought in by oil companies the Lebanese and Syrian pounds were not devalued in 1949 to below sterling. Exchange was controlled by one department for both countries and the note issue is in the hands of the French Banque de Syrie et du Liban.

But these links were incompatible with the differences that developed in the economic policies of the two countries when they became independent. Syria, in several years, has a large exportable surplus of agricultural products and little transit trade, whereas the debit trade balance of Lebanon is con-

* See Appendix IV, p. 120 below.

TRANSPORTATION AND INSURANCE

4571 Transportation

This includes freight charges, passenger fares and port charges.

[508 (1)
509] Freight: Lebanon has virtually no merchant fleet and, therefore, practically no income from sea freight. It has two airlines which handle both passengers and freight, but income from the latter could not be ascertained; however, as it is known to be relatively small, it could be disregarded without serious effect.

Payments for freight have already been accounted for in the import estimates which are given CIF (cf. p. 11-12).

(2) Passenger fares:

- a. The debit side of this item includes what "residents" in Lebanon pay for foreign carriers engaged in international transportation, whether by sea, air or land. Unfortunately available figures of arrivals into, and departures from Lebanon cover only Lebanese nationals travelling by air and sea, and it has been impossible to correct these figures to include all residents as well as travellers by land (cf. Table 25).

As the published government figures lump together all sea and air-travellers going through Beirut, it has been necessary to go back to the original abstracts to obtain the necessary breakdowns as to the countries of origin and destination and as to the mode of travel (i.e., whether by air or sea). Moreover as the abstract grouped under "other countries" a considerable number of travellers, it was necessary to make a sample study of the individual records from which the abstracts are computed to arrive at a rough breakdown of these "other countries".

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Communications are excellent in the coastal districts, but some parts of the interior are inaccessible, especially during the winter months, when snow accumulates on the mountain ridges. Good roads stretch north and south along the coast and to the interior, but the inland connections are restricted by the nature of the terrain and the shortage of suitable natural passes across the mountains. Truck highways skirt the coast and extend from Beirut to Damascus, Hama, Latakia and Syria. Beirut is also linked with Damascus by a railway through Hama, while a line from Hama through Hama joins the Istanbul-Baghdad railway at Aleppo. Tripoli is linked with the latter system by a branch from Hama. A coastal railroad, extending from Tripoli to Haifa, was constructed by the British military forces during World War II, and the Lebanon portion is still in operation. Beirut, the principal modern port, handles a large volume of transit traffic for Syria, Jordan, Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. Tripoli is a port of secondary significance, except as an oil-shipping center. The seaport of Sidon has recently been developed as the terminus of the trans-Arabian pipeline, serving as a Mediterranean port for the shipment of oil from the Saudi Arabian fields of the Arabian American Oil Company. The distances between land ports are too short for the promotion of inland air services, but Beirut is an important junction for international airlines serving Europe and the Near and the Far East.

Food and Nutrition

The nutritional standards of the people differ according to the prosperity and the territory with land values of the individual families, but they are reasonably high in most parts of the country. Bread and a meat-grained cereal known as bulgh, which are usually prepared from wheat but sometimes from barley or millet, are staple foods in both urban and rural areas. Rice is popular among all groups of the population. Liberal amounts of milk are consumed

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